

INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

Date: 01-Jul-1992 05:56pm GMT
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TO: See Below

Subject: SoS announces move to Strand Two

Comments by Sos - Stormont - I July 1992

PM Good afternoon - nice to be able to talk to you - I'm afraid it's going to rather brief but it's good news - the plenary met this afternoon after I had had consultations with part leaders and had heard the points that they wanted raise and at the plenary I was able to announce that I thought the time had c when we should now proceed to Strand Two of these talks. As you know it's alw been the agreement between the parties that that matter should be left to me and I've come to that conclusion. But the good thing is in particular that I able to reach that conclusion with the agreement of the party leaders on the basis of the consultations that they'd had with me and on the basis of the understandings that we have arrived at together. So the position is that Stra One is for the moment now concluded and we go into Strand Two. But as has alw been the case it is possible for the parties if they wish to do so to come ba and give further consideration to Strand One topics in the light of the progress that we make from now on.

Q Did you bridge the gap between the Unionist position and the SDLP position strand one to bring you into Strand two or do you just take the bull by the horns and move straight to Strand Two

Sir P. Well I think the important point is that the party leaders have all agreed - no dissentents - to the transition to Strand Two which I have announced. It was left to me to decide when the appropriate moment had arrive and I was able to do so with their agreement. So that is very good news.

Q Did you have any consultations with your counterparts in the Irish Governme today

Sir P I have had no consultation with my counterparts in the Irish Government today - I've consulted with the party leaders, which is what the agreement tha my predecessor Peter Brooks achieved over fifteen or sixteen months ago - tha it would be for the Secretary of State, after consulting with the part leader it would be for the Secretary of State to decide if the appropriate moment moment had come for transition to Strand Two and that's what's happened.

Q Could you clarify: you had a divided house - the sub committee's report whereby the SDLP had one position and the Unionists had another position - ar

you using that report as a basis for moving to Strand Two despite the disagreements

Sir P I hear what you say about that Mr Mallie - but I'm not commenting on it one way or another: I've come simply to announce that the transition has been made and that' it's been made for the reasons I have given.- that I think the appropriate moment has arrived and I've been able to make that decision with agreement of the party leaders and we've al of us agreed that it is sensible keep up (I'm sorry from the journalists' point of view) but it is sensible keep up the confidentiality that we have agreed upon.

I'd like to say that Jeremy Hanley who played such a tremendous part in the sub-committee's in this process over the last couple of months. He has been p of these negotiations all along and he was with me today when we consulted wi the party leaders and its been very much a team effort. Party leaders, Minist and officials - all have combined to bring this rather successful conclusion this stage of a very arduous process.

Q: Do you regard this as the most significant moment of the Talks process?

Sir P: Well it's the best moment so far.

Q: How do you interpret what Dr Paisley says though that unless there is agreement on Government structures in Northern Ireland you couldn't move to Strand 2.

Sir P: Well I think its up to you what interpretation you make... no I'm not going to give any interpretation on anything at all.....I have come just t let you know that we have reached this stage now with the agreement of all th party leaders and that's a very happy conclusion to what has it been now 8 or weeks and now we move forward to the next stage which will take place in Lond under the Chairmanship of Sir Ninian Steven.

Q: Was there a formula... did a formula emerge either by the good offices of Hanley or in plenary session that allowed this to take place. Presumably something changed over the last couple of weeks to allow this dramatic transition to take place. Did you present a formula.

Sir P; Sometimes the appropriate moment is recognisable when you see it and sometimes you have to wait a little for it to come along. But that has been t formula that my predecessor with the agreement of all the parties achieved so sixteen months ago that when after consulting with all the party leaders the Secretary of State believes the appropriate moment has come for transition to Strand 2 and indeed to Strand 3 because that also takes place at the same tim relationships east west as well as relationships North South when he thinks appropriate moment has come then he will make that transition.

I understand that that has been accepted in Dublin.. I have just spoken to Si Steven whose very pleased that he will now be able to take on the Chairmanshi of Strand 2.

Q: Timing?

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Well that's for Sir N but I daresay that it will be sooner rather than later and indeed I hope as I'm sure everybody in NI and more widely hopes it will be soon.

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